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A LUNATIC

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WED TO A LUNATIC.

WED TO A LUNATIC.

A WILD, WEIRD YARN OF LOVE,

AND SOME OTHER THINGS,

DELIVERED

IN THE FORM OF HASH,

FOR THE

BENEFIT OF TIRED READERS.

BY

FRANK W. HASTINGS,

AUTHOR OF SEVERAL WIDELY UNKNOWN WORKS.

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JUL 2 1896
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ST. JOHNSBURY, VT.:
L. W. ROWELL, PUBLISHER AND PRINTER.
1896.

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FRANK W. HASTINGS.

West Waterford,
Vt.

EPITAPH.

TO THE EVERLASTING, EVER-PRESENT, EVER-DIGNIFIED, EVER-PLENTIFUL AND NEVER-MURMURING WEATHER, THESE EVIDENCES OF DEMENTIA ARE INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

Once upon a midnight roaring, as Mariah
lay a snoring —
Snoring such snores as no mortal ever
snored before,
My soul refused to slumber, and it wandered
into the days of yore;
And I yelled in wildest whispers:
Can this be the creature I once adored?
Here I clawed my auburn whiskers,
still repeating,
Can, O can this be the creature
I once adored?

WED TO A LUNATIC.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

MARRIAGE.

MARRIAGE is rightly said to be a divine institution, but in the happiest marriages it requires only about two years time for the bulk of the divinity to sort of evaporate, and then the poor matrimonial voyagers awake to the fact that we are all human beings, and some of us considerably human at that.

By the law of contrasts!

No other explanation can be given, why beauty and ugliness, brains and idiocy, culture and ignorance, goodness and badness become tangled up in matrimony.

It is natural to admire that quality in others which is an aching void in ones own composition, whether the missing link be lovable or kickable.

By the law of contrasts!

It too, must be of divine origin, for by it many a being absolutely destitute of one hugable qualification, except some physical, intellectual or spiritual deformity, have folded unto themselves perfect gems of helpmeets — wretches, that otherwise would have been obliged to promenade the byways and hedges of life alone and solitary. Meantime the sold-out angels gnash their teeth and marvel aloud why they didn't allow them to — when it is too late.

Funny, isn't it, we failed to notice that the creature had deep red hair, and lots of it, until the sparks began to fly, and it's funny again that the sparks never fly until after Hymen has officiated.

Curious fellow, that Hymen!

O, could we have known in season, that our Duckies would some day caress us with the fire-shovel, and our Daisies would crown our

bald heads with a squash pie, direct from the oven, how different would have been the lurid thusly!

But we didn't until we learned it—not until after we had nearly murdered five venerable fossils who attempted to tell us—not until clammy experience drove the fact right into our thick heads.

Well, it is stated, on good authority, that the chief object of life should be the accumulation of knowledge.

By the law of contrasts!

Undoubtedly that law has been in operation for ages, numbering its victims by the million, yet of the vast horde who have wallowed in matrimonial honey and mire, also that innumerable embryo army who are destined by all the slobber of a blissful courtship, soon to enter the shadows of wedlock, the astounding power of contrasts, as a producer of certain effects, has escaped observation. Most freely I admit it never occurred to me until after I had been led to the marriage altar by a blushing maid. Then reason gradually returned and I endeavored to

account for numerous peculiar circumstances in my changed existence; however, I will truthfully rehearse the cold facts and let a candid world gather therefrom such crumbs of comfort as may be.

Mariah J. Jenks and myself became one by actual marriage!

For the purposes of these thrilling yarns it is unnecessary to repeat the sweet and sickening details which brought about that relationship. Suffice it to say, that a proposition tending directly to that result, was submitted by myself to the aforesaid Mariah, and she, after proper feminine deliberation and several long, softly sighed nays, having the genuine yea accent, finally and fully collapsed in my arms.

O—ee me—ee—whye—Ie—e—dovee—ever was—ee. (Curtain).

We were married by the Rev. T. S. Pax, Mrs. Pax serving as bridesmaid, groomsman and witness.

Thus simply was the ceremony solemnized, yet withal solidly performed. I say solidly performed—that I went through the operation

in a substantial manner, is at least beyond question. If there is any doubt in the matter to Mariah belongs the censure.

Listen!

I distinctly answered yes five times to each question of the marriage service, besides working in fourteen perfectly audible yesses, sort of between times, and to make the thing absolutely sure I was continually bowing my head, about eleven wags to the minute, I should judge—honest affirmative bobs, every one of them.

But Mariah stood like a piece of statuary in mid-winter, during the ordeal, making no response, either by word, look or motion, a style of proceeding which I considered very singular; but she said later that she thought I had done enough answering for one family.

Well, this was our first wedding experience, and the supposition is not reasonable that we should go through it as gracefully as a veteran in the business—Brigham Young, for instance—or as at fashionable weddings, wherein the contracting parties give daily public rehearsals for eight weeks before the occurrence

of the real event, Wednesday and Saturday afternoon matinees included.

However, laying all criticisms aside, that simple performance has withstood several years of matrimonial blizzards and domestic calms. We are yet one; still far enough adown the road that either of us can express an individual and distinct opinion without kissing each other immediately after.

Not until that hazy period of conjugal life is reached and past can one render judgment as to the pros or cons of married life, for the delightful reason that one at that stage of their existence has no judgment. What was once brain is now a shapeless, sticky mass.

But the ship is launched. Onward she sails through petty disputes and broken chairs; intemperance and soiled carpets; other loves and elopements into the beautiful harbor of divorce—unless, peradventure, the love aboard is of the right make and sufficient in quantity to guide the craft into other ports.

As an amateur husband I achieved the usual success, and if society had not been constructed on the ridiculous plan whereby

one must have money, bonnets and things, many of my troubles would have been avoided, but long since I learned to pass unnoticed matters of so trifling a nature. I have become so skillful, even, that a heavenly smile radiates from every crack and crevice of my noble features as I chew and try to swallow Mariah's sour bread.

As a matter of course I always expect a cod-fish salad after I have ordered fricassee swine. Yet, why allow things of so little import to create family disturbance?

It's foolishness personified!

With all her failings, I must, in justice to Mariah, state that she never used a horse-whip on me; never attempted to make me into sausage; never staggered into my presence intoxicated. In fact she was quite free from all antics of that description; but in affairs outside the common place, I am sorry to be obliged to confess, there seemed to be a terrible deficiency in her internal head apparel.

By the law of contrasts!

As between Mariah and myself, I discovered

shortly after regaining my normal health, there existed a vast intellectual vacuum.

To Mariah I ascribed all the vacuum; to myself belong the entire vastness. In her feeble mind lay the fascination which had lured a lovely blossom into connubial bonds. It was the old story—merely the attraction of opposites—which in our case signified that imbecility had drawn brains, and vice versa.

How many times, when I have been giving expression to stupendous thoughts—ideas captured in the highest realms of mental altitudes—has Mariah rudely interrupted me by gushing forth a torrent of nonsense! Such absurdities!

But of that later, and in concluding this chapter I will only say that during our courtship I passed many sleepless nights in useless worry lest all the fellows would want Mariah, and possibly win her; but now I am wondering, in a slight way, very slightly as yet, please remember—scarcely a ripple—why I or anybody else should ever have wanted such a creature as Mariah.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

WORK.

THE first obstruction of any account ran against in our trip arose over the labor question, and had I not been a man of deep tact, beautiful generosity and a profound strategist, in all probability our combined hearts would have become twain.

I must refer briefly to the past—Mariah was an heiress.

By inheritance she was the owner of a farm, also proprietor of some cattle, horses, sheep, swine, cats, hens, a dog and one rooster.

For a youth without special advantages, utterly destitute of any dead and buried foreign titles, with even his credit so poor that he was unable to get into debt, to raise himself up

from a common male boyhood, to be the husband of an heiress of such magnitude, was a great scheme well carried out. Yet, in the light of subsequent knowledge, I honestly believe it would have been much more brilliant to have wooed and won some millionaire's only child and daughter.

I can say, in all candor, trusting that the statement will be credited by thinking people, I should have loved Mariah just as ardently had she been worth millions of dollars, clear cash, as possessing only a few paltry acres, hens, etc., etc.

Now farming is the science of lubrication by actual perspiration, which in our tongue means work, which is likewise extremely distasteful to my weary nature.

Work is one of the evils that must exist, and like all evils I have made a heroic struggle to shun it; but I regret to say that many times my attempts have been unsuccessful — in avoiding labor, I mean.

Alas! By some curious freak of nature in my composition, there was a fineness of fibre, a tired feeling, which would not permit me to

become ecstatic over anything that contained even a suggestion of physical labor.

I could ride for miles through rural districts passing acres of storm-lodged grain, and observe the horny-fisted sons of toil mutilate the aforesaid grain with an instrument called a scythe, rivulets of aromatic perspiration rippling, sparkling and dancing across their broad shoulder blades, but not a poetical emotion would arise to increase the pulsations of my steely heart—not a one.

Even when the cackling of the hens announced the advent into this cruel world of another egg, I remained calm and motionless, unless I was invited, as I frequently was by Mariah, to "bring that egg in." I do not desire it understood that I maliciously reposed, when property would waste from lack of attention—merely this, I believed in economizing my vital forces for use in some mighty emergency.

To illustrate: I considered it a foolish and extravagant use of time and strength the making of seventeen hundred and fifty journeys, daily, to the hennery, when, according to my

judgment, one trip per day answered all the practical demands of the case.

But Mariah reasoned in this way: an egg left in the nest is a "temptation in the path of an honest hen and when a hen once gets to eating eggs, she's a ruined hen." As if a hen was possessed of an immortal soul!

And Mariah?

Mariah was positively unhappy unless engaged in some labor. To her, work was a luxury. At 4.15 A. M., she would, without apparent effort, wrench herself from slumber and plunge smilingly into the daily drudgeries, and if by chance there was a spare moment, the insane creature would seize an old rag or paper, and go tearing up and down the house assassinating in a most brutal manner, innocent flies.

Oh, to this day, there is a feeling of sickness tinged with sadness, permeating my entire system as I think of a nature so coarsely endowed! What if all were possessed of such a spirit as Mariah's? What would become of the world?

Her soul was in her vocation. From the

greatest to the smallest detail of agricultural affairs she seemed enraptured.

Work?

Why, because Mariah said "she couldn't afford to hire a man. The farm was not large enough to support so many men."

Strange logic. Didn't the farm previous to our marriage, produce the necessary funds for hired labor and a surplus over? Yes.

Could it be that woman had inveigled me into wedlock purely for the labor there was concentrated in my frail form, as she would buy a horse or an ox? The idea nearly broke my heart.

The perfidy concealed in some breasts!

That labor was one of the great necessities, in fact the chief instrument in materializing all earthly comforts, Mariah's ideas and mine were a perfect coincidence. Our diversity of opinion arose not from the fact itself, but from the peculiarities arising therefrom. My idea of labor was simply this: Let somebody else perform the vulgar deed, I consider the mind with a very small portion of the body worked in merely for exercise, as the only object

worthy of a really serious life, while Mariah preached and practiced all physical labor, with just enough brain worked in to keep abreast of the rest of civilization.

Stupidity!

But if she had practised her theories and omitted the preaching much happiness would have been added to my troubled life.

She wouldn't.

Indeed, I do not now recall an opportunity Mariah missed of trying to impress me of the correctness of her ways. The moment I sat down for meditation, endeavoring to evolve some project for the elevation of myself and the world at large, that moment the meeting opened and my sensitive nature was compelled to absorb a volley of nonsensical stuff of which the following is a fair sample:

"As long as the stomach of man clawed the air for something to eat; as long as people persisted in the foolish habit of wearing clothing and living in houses and hankering after comforts generally, so long had somebody got to work. Nothing could be accomplished without work. Folks became weak and

dyspeptic without work. Lots and lots of men, and boys too, got to drinking and acting just because they wouldn't work. People that didn't feel any responsibility of life only to be burdens for those that worked ought to be buried. What was the sense of sitting down and thinking all the time, so long as my thoughts didn't amount to anything?"

She wished the whole tramp kingdom, past, present and future, was rammed down the crater of Mt. Vesuvius.

And then there was Thomas Plug!

(Mariah's brilliant dissertations on the labor question were always brought to a sublime finish, by flourishing the marvellous feats of Thomas Plug before me.)

Couldn't I see what work had done for him? Commenced without a cent, bought the farm and paid for it and fixed up the buildings and things and set out shade trees and bought a nice carriage and was one of the town officers, and, O dear me! Volumes of such frivolous ideas, too light for reptition.

Confound the Plug creation, anyhow!

It is terrible to be misunderstood, horrible

not to feel the power of appreciation. I was willing, nay even anxious to labor, but I had delicate scruples as to the nature of the exertion.

There were devices surging, ever wiggling through my cranium which I honestly felt were doomed to revolutionize society—thoughts destined to remodel human existence. True, I had not as yet put any of those great sentiments into shape to materialize for the reason that my conscience would not permit me to spring upon an unsuspecting world any scheme not perfected in all its details, in the completion of which Mariah was no end of annoyance by her practical notions. For instance, suppose just at that point wherein Shakespeare causes Hamlet to ejaculate:

"Punch, brother! punch, punch with care!
Punch in the presence of the passenjare!"

Suppose, I say, Shakespeare's wife had shrieked, "Bill go and paris-green the potato 'bugs,'" at the precise moment he had penned the first "punch," in all reasonable probability the beautiful passage above quoted would have been lost to the world.

The fact is the intellectual and the physical and potato bugs, etc., are separate and distinct qualities. When ones soul is soaring about in the regions of stupendous thought, he or she can't gracefully wield the barn shovel.

But on one score I have no occasion for regret. I always allowed Mariah to work all she wished to. With touching self-denial extending to her the privilege of bringing in the wood and other light tasks, which properly belong to me to perform. If in my loving watchfulness over Mariah I detected her especially despondent, I would immediately, after supper, snap asunder hometies and spend the evening down at the store court, thus giving her the additional happiness of milking the cows, caring for the horses and the like.

How ennobling such self-sacrifice!

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

LOVE.

AFTER such magnanimity as I had evinced towards Mariah, the natural inference would have been that our married life must have been a bed of roses—many tinted and perfumed.

But alas for the perversity of the human heart, the facts of the case were far different. She did not have that reverence for me as the head of the family which I was justly entitled to. There was something wrong, yet. Plainly I had not fathomed all the mysteries of the hymenean shadows.

Falling in love and tumbling into matrimony, though dauby and difficult, is simplicity itself in comparison with keeping those fires

of affection burning at just the right temperature, to last all along down the road which requires fifty years more or less to travel and which is strewn with diamonds and mire and tears and smiles.

Philosophers are practically agreed that "Love is the greatest thing in the world."

But like all great things love is not properly comprehended by the masses. The thing is not studied; is not looked into from the right point of view, to produce great results in the majority of cases. By humanity at large, love is, and means only the concentration of a certain amount of affection, according to the capacity of the patient, upon some object of the opposite sex, which is in fact merely one of the smallest rudiments of love.

The sad condition of life in which I found myself, led me to thoroughly investigate the laws of love, and I discovered that the great uplifting principle of love was to love one's self above all and all the time. Strict adherence to that rule means happiness conjugally and prosperity generally.

For the first two weeks of our married existence I honestly loved Mariah a little better than myself, but in so doing I observed there was something wrong; that to pursue such a course would be ruinous to Mariah and the generations to follow. Already she had a disagreeably familiar way of connecting me with various labors.

The problem must be solved or down went my dignity; my position as the sublime figure-head of the family universe.

In my keen researches I learned that in the proper application of love lay the secret; the balm which was to sustain my supremacy. I reduced this loving business to an accurate science, and how beautiful, how majestic, absolutely large, is love when administered in skillful doses. I must love myself best, which I immediately proceed to do.

Set it down as an indisputable fact, if you are going to maintain your dignity as head of a family, or reap your share of earthly shekels and glory, you must love yourself—love with an intensity that will enable you to nobly appropriate other people's interests to your

own good. Sit up nights, if necessary, and crawl all around through your soul and worship your own darling self.

Excuse my cringing modesty while I extract from my gilded career lucid examples to the point.

Now I love Mariah; I love our very several offsprings; I love the world and the people therein, with the exception of a few dozens. I love numerous other calamity, but the sum total of all that love, immense as it is, is as nothing in comparison with that unquenchable conflagration of consuming love which I keep roaring night and day for myself.

It's that, and not my affection for David B. Hill, which elects me President of the United States, every now and then. That brilliant oration; that bewitching music; that profound sermon to which you listened in a thrilled condition, and which you ascribed to my goodness, genius or patriotism, as the case might be.

Incidentally the reasons you assign were an inspiration to me, but the great motive power, the unseen force that hustled about and got

me there was full blossomed adoration for myself.

It was the pleasure the applause of the world gave; the money there was in the performance; the tickling sensation way in a remote and concealed corner of my being, that possibly my name would go stalking and crashing and making an unearthly racket generally, off down through the centuries.

Love of that high excellence does not come at one's beck and call, at any moment, to be ruthlessly cast aside after using. No, it must be sought after, coddled, vigorously cultivated, and when once attained, firmly held on to.

To raise myself up to the proper standard of love I was compelled to pass through a most energetic course of training, self-imposed.

For several years, three times daily, not less than thirty minutes at each time, did I stand before a large mirror and gaze at myself with loving, worshipful eyes. While so standing I would hug and caress and squeeze myself, at the same time talking to

myself about myself in a very gentle, cooing tone of voice, uttering such sentiments as only one deeply in love with himself can utter.

Often when undergoing this treatment, before I became an expert as a lovist, a feeling of sadness would come over me as I thought of those streams of innocent youthful love that used to gush forth from my stammering soul into Mariah's ear.

Love running pure and clear and without effort! Love into which no form of selfishness entered! Love that does not crawl into one's system but just once in a lifetime! Love that seemed to be vanishing with the going years, or was it simply changing form.

As time moves along new phases of life develop, yet I can but think, had I not worked up this self-admiration, I might, with other promising people who have never studied the subject of love, have found my eye teeth sunk into oblivion, and right in the dewy green of noble manhood, discovered myself the centre of attraction on some hastily constructed gallows.

And so Mariah and I waddled onward.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

COUNTRY.

IF one is contented in this world, it matters little as to their vocation or location, providing, of course, that the place and business is of such a nature as to keep the incumbent thereof out of those places where the windows are cased with iron bars. But if one is discontented in their work, however great or honorable the calling, he or she might just as well be jumping about in the infernal regions, so far as earthly happiness is concerned.

I did not like farming, because I felt that nature had intended me for greatness. Sometimes when hoeing cabbage, or chopping wood, I would be overcome with the feeling

that I was actually commiting a great sin in thus burying my talents. If such should eventually prove to be the case, to the power that questions it, I shall refer directly to Mariah. Doing her farmwork is enough, without being held responsible for her sins.

She said she didn't believe I was much bigger than common folks, if I was any. She much preferred being sort of medium sized and having a comfortable home all our own, than to being a ninth rate nobody in city or village, and living up in the top of some great high building, where she'd got to use balloons, elevators, parachutes and things in getting up to and tumbling down from. She didn't want to breathe air over after everybody, and drink water full of snakes and bugs and things. (That was Mariah's uncultured way of speaking of the scholarly bacilli.) She didn't want to be obliged to use eggs that had got to be assassinated. A man not possessed of the necessary mental requisites for becoming a Webster or a Longfellow, could so conduct himself on a farm as to become the owner of a pair of gingham shirts.

Didn't I remember James Dough? — Thought he could be very great if he only could get into some place where he wasn't. Sold his farm and went to New York city. A hawker got all his money away from him and now he has nothing, really nothing.

She always knew that Jim didn't know enough to even close his eyes in slumber.

That woman's talk makes me very tired.

But speaking of farming and country life generally, how little is known of it, as it actually is, by outsiders.

Now and then some author fresh from the city wilds, roosts in the shade upon the hill-side, of a July morning, with the mercury boiling in the hundreds, and watches the old farmer on the meadow rasping down the grass, and thereupon begins to cackle about the glistening scythe, dew-bespangled violets, the ever-gleeful bumblebee, etc., etc., and closes the song with a low sad grunt on the heavenly bliss of the farmer's lot.

Regard all such effusions as the outpouring of a weak or malicious mind, and if I were the farmer alluded to.

I would cleave that poet's body in twain
And leave his head upon the main,
To wither and poetise in the rain.

That makes a very pretty poem or a first-class humorous article, but there is nothing in it with the exception of the violets, that is at all truthful to nature. Even the stately bumblebee, with his desires for chewing people, is slandered. To substantiate this, let the aforesaid poet mow a few swaths on the same meadow—hornets' nest, mosquitoes and snakes, included.

Presently he will be firmly convinced that there is a mighty difference between fact and fancy.

Country life as a means of living, is one thing, and living in the country merely for recreation, is quite another, and whether city or country bred but very few people have the naturalist's instinct or desire to become familiar with the wonderful colors, sounds and signs the country affords.

The average citizen's observations in nature embraces the whole landscape at a glance and produces no impression on the mind, unless

something a little out of the usual order looms up to our visions, like a specially fine cluster of berries or an oddly clothed bush, when our sleepy souls arise nobly to the occasion and we exclaim in a gurgling tone, about half way between the bass of a bull-frog and the tenor of a screech owl:

U-o-oh the—the berries!

My-e se-e those lovely fo-o-ho-o-iage!

And there endeth the lessons of nature to the general mind. Scenes constantly before us, even in the most humble landscape, of such grandeur of color and dimensions, music so nicely arranged as to volume and accuracy in sound, earth and sky so radiantly beautiful that the highest arts of man cannot reproduce the effect to a satisfied degree of perfection.

But what makes the cold chills circulate up and down my spine is the misleading tendency of most all literature on country life. From it one infers that all rural people have to do is to repose in the shade, whittle their corns and gaze at the hillside.

Don't get things mixed.

Here is an author who attempts a discrip-

tion of a farmer's life, on "Sunday morning," and it is a fair sample of what I am trying to make clear.

By actual count he uses nine hundred words in a genuine whoop over the glimmering sun rays, the twittering birds, the vine-clad tree, the moss-covered post, the croaking frog and sprightly cricket, etc., all of which is very pretty, but I suppose I was to learn in that chapter about what farmer so-so did that particular Sabbath morning. Indeed the author so informed me at the close of the previous chapter, and here is all the light in that line: "The morning chores are done, and Mr. X. is ready for church."

Extremely brief and unpretending that sentence, yet it is the only inkling in the chapter we receive of Mr. X's mode of life. The impression conveyed is that he has done nothing this morning but suck down in wall-eyed wonder the beauties of his natural surroundings.

"The morning chores are done and Mr. X. is ready for church."

Listen while I put into unvarnished Eng-

lish the actual meaning of that expression:—Got up, (a work of itself considered by good judges a full half day's labor), climbed into a pair of fifty-cent overalls; dislocated my left shoulder pulling on my cowhide boots; built a fire in kitchen stove; cut my finger while whittling shavings for same; thought of something but didn't say a word; proceeded to the barn with the milk pails; milked; old cow slashing the air with her tail in vain attempts to murder a sweetly singing fly, succeeded in artistically decorating my classic visage; endeavored to sing a sacred melody, but when pitching the tune got another slap in the mouth from the same tail; ceased singing and murmured some intense thoughts suitable to the occasion; fed horses; drove cows to pasture; run milk through separator; pigs got out; a general race ensued; Mariah takes part and wins first money, hogs second with myself and dog a close third; breakfast; groomed horses and cleaned stables; got my shoulder joint back into place by pulling off my boots; cut off and dug out my auburn beard, (incidentally Mariah has remarked

that my beard resembled barbed wire in all respects but color); peeled off and slung carefully into the corner my farmer's trousseau; bathed; donned my Sunday suit, and I was ready for church.

O my poor lacerated heart!

Again the general writer in producing the conversation of his country characters causes them to use expressions in use one hundred years ago, and which now are very rarely heard even among the least scholarly of that class. It's true that agricultural communities do not flounder about in a style of expression gilded with superb flourishes of rhetoric, yet it is also true, that one hundred years with this old world ambling along at a 2.04 gait, brings about marvellous changes, and while we poor children of the woods may not have kept abreast of the procession, we have at least been within "how are ye" distance, some of the time.

Neither is this rosey-posey class of literature of which I have spoken to be charged entirely to authors ignorant of country doings, for some country writers, knowing full well

by a life-time association, the difference between a pumpkin and a tree-toad, yet persist in staggering along in the old heavens-orange-tinted ruts.

Only last winter Mariah was invited by an agricultural society to prepare an essay on the subject, "Farmers' Wives," and deliver at one of their meetings. I thought I should certainly hear in her address the lot of a farmer's wife truthfully portrayed.

Well!

It appeared that that woman had rumaged through all the poetry from Chaucer down to and including James Whitcomb Riley, and every idea that contained the least shimmer of a glimmer, of a rustle of a tint of a shade, in the meadow, on the glade, or the vines by the pines and purring whines over in the deep, deep mines, where hares get away from bears, by the stump next to the pump, by doing some big jumps, etc., formed the substance of her remarks. Just enough originality mixed in to connect the stuff. Not a clue in the whole essay did Mariah give as to the actual lives of "Farmers' Wives." Not a word

about salt pork and company, chikens with choleric tendences, emaciated calves that must have scalt milk, churning days where richly colored profanity came freely two hours before the butter thought of coming. Not one tender word even concerning fly specks, a science in which Mariah had by patient industry become an authority, on threshing-machine days. In fact, nothing mentioned that distinctly marks the career of a farmer's wife.

However, it may be safely asserted, that into country people's lives, as into all other lives, there meanders just so much (about half and half) of sugar and vinegar, and it is one of the unsolved mysteries, why, when there are millions of God's good acres, uncultivated and unoccupied, on this little earth of ours to-day, whereon, by honest labor mixed with a brain or two, an independent and comfortable living could be obtained; that millions of the human family should swelter in all the impurities that poverty compells in over-crowded cities. Millions of our fellow creatures that do not from birth to death

breathe one breath of pure air or drink one swallow of actual water who do not even get one good uninterrupted squint at the blue sky—and still the acres lie unimproved.

Why is it thus?

Right here, Mariah rudely spoke out, saying: "It was probably because they thought they were too large—too large for a small place like the country."

That's some of Mariah's sarcasm.

But, seriously, if I wasn't so completely mashed with myself and my dollars; if I could be positively certain that the other chaps wouldn't be prancing into heaven some fine morning with a better filled pocket book than my own, I should invest a few thousand dollars in removing the poor from the cities and establishing them in the country. In the immediate vicinity of each colony, I should ordain a respectable sized cemetery, that lazy and vicious subjects might be buried with slight expense.

I dare not do it. The risk is too great.

What if death should come stamping up to my door some rainy evening and find

I was short a million of dollars or two? Ten to one I should be unable to procure a ticket entitling me to a seat pretty well up in front.

It would be folly.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

CHURCH.

THE earth, in its annual trot around the sun, had once more brought forth July, and with it came all the comforts common to Hadaistical atmospheres.

The fatherless mosquito again slumbered upon my bed post by day and mutilated my wasted features by night, singing the meantime the sweetest and most profane inspiring melodies. Briefly, all nature was at its height, from the agile bedbug down to the soaring hen-hawk; from the sweet scented thoroughwort blossom up to the pond lily. Verily, all was hustle. The justly celebrated new-mown hay also appears—the hay which so many weak minded people have become

convulsed into rhymes over, yet can never be prevailed upon to eat a mouthful of — either rhymes or hay.

Haying — blessed, sanctified haying — how often hast thou lathered my body and soul in thy perspiring embrace. For thee have I committed several transgressions, for which you in the mysterious future will have to ante up. Into thy arms, O bewitching successor of last year's haying, I plunge with mingled feelings (mostly mingled), as I ever shall until my life and common hay shall be no longer mixed.

It is a Sabbath morning. The month of July always produces more or less of Sabbath mornings — a reflection which is offered purely for information. It may seem incredible, but the sun shines, the birds sing, the leaves are tittering in the breeze; in fact all nature is indulging in a good broad grin. Assuredly, it is a beautiful day, a sublime streak of weather.

"The morning chores are done and Mariah and I are ready for church."

I should add to my previous list of chores,

that on this particular morning, Mariah's old lady turkey, who several weeks ago tore herself from those she loved (I am speaking of the turkey, now), and in a secluded dell by the woods settled down and set on some eggs, only appearing in the wicked haunts of man for dinner and tea, until this morning, when she strode forth, accompanied by seventeen young obble-wobble-gobbles, which, of course, necessitated quite a little extra work on the part of Mariah, I performing the brain part, arising therefrom.

On the subject of church-going, Mariah and I are a unit. The only question up to date that we have spontaneously agreed on. We think but from somewhat different reasons that it is a duty to be regular at church, though each of us a member "in good and regular standing." Mariah looks upon it as a duty owed to this and seven or eight other worlds, but I confine my church affairs entirely to this world with some select proviso's thrown in.

What's the sense of trying to navigate the whole universe, spiritually?

But Mariah is very peculiar. It's quite plausible that one with a less than medium sized soul can keep that little soul in perfect repair and have time to spare in bolstering up other souls, as Mariah does, but a soul of length and breadth and huge dimensions generally, similar to mine, requires all one's energies to keep the thing in a fairly presentable shape, even for earthly audiences to gaze into.

Simply because an animal has only two legs never was conclusive evidence to my mind that it had a soul. If it has one it is in countless instances of such infinitesimal area as not to be worth the trouble of cultivation.

It seems to an unprejudiced observer that in all so-called civilized communities, and some pagan ones, a series of judiciously gotten up funerals arranged on an economical plan, would be a decided help towards the millennium.

When we arrived at the church about half of the male part of the congregation, as usual, were roosting in various attitudes on the

church steps, and in front, waiting for the last bell to call them in, also to glare and stare, and mash, and gossip, but by the exercise of dexterity and Mariah's elbow, we run the gauntlet unscathed.

By the way, why is it, in city or country church, theatre or dance hall, before and after service, the entrance thereto is always blocked with apparitions? There they stand, gazing with an intensity of "horrososity"! Shivering truly heroic; a perfect picture of an orang-outang eating peanuts; apparently impervious to cold, heat, rain or snow; always on deck; grand emblems of fool-in-the-head.

And for what?

The last bell rang. The choir launched out on the Doxology. Those who were serving the Lord outside entered now, and the congregation, with the exception of a few, the very eclat of our society, were present. Those few never reaching church, only in season to receive the benediction, being of that superb mechanism as to require no more than that amount of spiritual food for the

week. At least, I suppose that is the reason given by certain folks for tardiness at church. I know from positive experience, however, that these late comers are no end of annoyance, not only to the preachers and those who are paying attention to the services, but especially is it a matter of vexation to those weary souls who have sought the quiet of God's house for peaceful slumber.

There is no doubt in my mind but this identical Sunday which was destined to have been the supreme effort of Deacon Pelix's life, was rudely shattered, ruined beyond hope, by the untimely entrance of the Dane girls. He had just given birth to a snore, or rather the introductory strains of a snore which measured 178 seconds to its apex, and was striking in splendidly on the allegretto movement which leads down to the snapped-off collapse in the finale, when came the interruption.

Mariah said, in kind of a mad tone, that measuring a snore was great business, anyhow, especially in church.

Besides criticising my church etiquette and

paying strict attention to the services, Mariah can give a minute description of every polonaise, basque, skirt, dress, cloak, blouse and hair pin; all hoods, toques, hats, bonnets and laces; the length, breadth, width, hue, color, age, shade, and price of all ribbons; the number of each shirr, yoke, tuck, bias, hem, binding, plate and gore; feathers, furbelows, and numerous other arrangements, whose technical names I do not recall at the present moment. I do not mention this in a boastful spirit, just because Mariah is so fortunate as to be a wife of mine, or because I think her mind towers above the average female mind, but as showing the vast intricacy of woman's brain; the ability to concentrate on various and widely different subjects at the same instant.

But whether considered from the snoring standpoint or in the light of the above enumerated togglery, the most of us have some side entertainment to be used during church service.

It must be extremely discouraging for a minister of the Gospel to talk to beings, who

apparently are incapable of making any personal application of divine teachings.

That inspiration was suggested to me several years ago, but I never was vividly impressed with its importance until to-day. Rev. Pax was telling of a marvelous city, having "three gates on either side," and as the beauties of that wonderful place were described, I recalled a number of my fellow citizens who would be entirely out of place amidst such gorgeous environments. I even felt injured, for as the sermon proceeded the parson was actually making room for all the human family in that magnificent city. He has turned the last leaf of his manuscript and is well down on the page. No distinction yet. The whole crowd, my enemies included, are almost on the golden streets.

Can the man be insane?

The Bible is closed, the sermon laid aside, Rev. Pax advances to one side of the pulpit, pauses an instant, and repeats solemnly, "and nothing that maketh a lie or worketh an abomination shall enter therein."

Good! That shuts the gates solidly against several I know of.

Liars that any locality might look up to in pride, and as for abominations, they were distinguished artists in that line. Thomas Plug, Franklin J. Saphead, and Pumpkin R. Squash were the ones I had especial reference to.

Could it be possible those men were so hardened in depravity as not to realize their situation? I gave each a searching glance with sort of a sorrowful smile attached to the end of it, for appearances, and if you will believe it I caught those three hypocrites staring straight at me with all the might of their respective eyes, and each feature was radiant with ghastly grins, saying, plainer than words could express it, "that fixes him."

Just why people should entertain any such ideas of myself is unaccountable. My life, so far as any outward evidence shows, is within one or two shades of perfection. I have always been extremely cautious in committing sin to have it invisible to the world. If there is anything that is nauseous to my sensitive

nature it is the absurd way some folks have of deviating from perpendicular rectitudes. Can't even perform the rudiments of sin without making public exhibitions of themselves.

Sickening!

When we were going home from church, I tried to impress upon Mariah the awful wickedness of doing wrong and being found out in it. I related to her my observations of the day. The unparalleled conceit of those men. My sympathy with the Rev. Pax. How I had wrenched my brain in inventing conditions that would allow my errors to fall naturally on to somebody else. I told her of the many times I had denied myself the simple luxury of profanity and fabrication for the reason I could not see my way clear for holding her or some one else responsible for the act. And as to the classics in sin, why, I frequently devoted months of study to a single crime, before the situation appeared safe for operation. In bringing about that scandal, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Just so sure as I become eloquent on a subject and have reached the climax in description or argument, equally certain is Mariah to interrupt me. And I have noticed with pain of late, she prefaces her talk with some slurring illusion to myself. However, she is under headway now and running like a clock without a pendulum, and I am powerless to do more than give the jist of her lunatic utterances: "Couldn't I see there was nothing in the world half as wicked as to do the way I said. Pretending to be so awful good and all the time working up some meanness that other folks had got to account for. It was just such creatures as I was that caused people of the world to talk so about the church and church members. She didn't blame Tim Tank, mean as he was, for saying that if I got within sight of heaven he should get to the gates and inside without the least bit of trouble. I wasn't so cunning by considerable as I thought I was. Lots of those smart games I had chuckled over folks knew a few days after who cut 'em up. If she couldn't belong to the church and do what

she ought to she wouldn't belong at all. Why couldn't I be good for the sake of goodness and try and make the world better. Why couldn't I practice what I had publicly professed to believe."

How much longer Providence would have allowed such cruelty practiced on me without interference, I do not know, had not Mariah at this instant discovered her calves (not including myself—there are five calves in Mariah's herd) exploring the mysteries of Thomas Plug's corn-field. And without stopping to consider the best way of getting those calves into their own field, she bounded over the fence and I after her, which of course frighten the calves into running, and we run after them, which also increased their velocity. But why harrow peaceful minds in rehearsing the horrows of that race. It is sufficient to say that after one hour's time, in which we went through every bog-hole, everywhere, in fact within a radius of one mile, the calves, through some strange miscalculation of locality, jumped into their own field. Mariah and I were completly exhausted spirit-

ually and pretty well used up physically.

Reader, did you ever experience the excruciating joy, the exhilarating pleasure, the soul-testing satisfaction of meandering at a 2.14 clip through green fields, over beautiful hills, down shady ravines and by the miry meadows, in pursuit of wild calves?

If never, "ye know not what it is to live."

But I am nearly discouraged trying to elevate Mariah to the present era. She is a good eight centuries behind the times.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

RELIGION.

REALLY, there is not much difference in poor humanity.—Cannibles, Voltaires, and on through the other forms of civilization. If difference does exist, it's in the conditions, not in the soul.

All are born without teeth.

All aspire, snicker, cry, die, and, usually, are fortunate enough to be buried. All are impelled by the same principle. All are scrambling, trampling the weak into dust, and raising thunder generally, in a maniacal haste to get there first.

Get where?

I don't know. But we all keep scratching and clawing and digging and cleaving

the sea, earth and air, for something.

I hear a clumsy tread! The house shakes! Mariah enters.

Holy horrors!

Cannibals?

That's what I said.

Mariah admits I am a fair type of civilization, neither the worst nor the best, yet as between a cannibal and myself she haughtily says the comparison would give a number of points in favor of the cannibal. That apparently is a compliment to somebody, but not for me as her wild ravings tend to show. She said:

"The victim of the gentle man-eater didn't have to languish weary months in gloomy suspense as to his fate. No reprieves or bouquets to worry about. Sudden death embraced him, then the carvist; then the cook; then the gaudily attired waitresses; and last, but not least, the stomachs of the famished household. Thus did he escape, not only the agonies of a lingering death, but all the dismal processes of the grave."

I believe that woman has got the dyspepsia!

The misery I had brought upon my victims! The hellish devices I had invented! I only, for the further purpose of my ambitions and gratifications had spared their lives. Indeed in their death would lie misfortune to me. Many a miserable wretch would have, if possible, torn himself from my clutch, and with unspeakable rapture allowed himself to become material for a Cannibal Pie, at the same time most fervently thanking the unseen powers that a life filled with all the sorrows and disappointments contained in the schedule should so suddenly and easily terminate.

What wrecks strewed my pathway to the heights! How many forlorn beings I had kicked aside in my insane climbing to be top of the heap! What despair in all forms had I not caused or seen, yet passed unheeded! Because, if I stopped to solace and assist, the crowd would pass me beyond all hopes of regaining.

What was a human life, more or less, to me? I must hustle onward, ever hitherward. Still in the midst of all this magnificent self

I found ample time to render thanks unto the good Lord that I was not like that floundering pirate yonder.

Why, Mariah!

All the shades of goodness, all the kinds of badness I had adopted as the changing circumstances of my life demanded. Nothing so high, nothing so low but I availed myself of it, in the furtherance of my plans. Bob Voltaire, Bob Paine, Bob Ingersoll, and lots of other Bob of Bobs could do all that. No wonder the Bobs bob right up in meeting, and say "Look at the look of us! We'll smash your Bibles and invisible idols into flittereens and then euchre ye at your own game. See how pretty we are, and oh! so good, and not burdened with a religious strap of any description. Ye can't come any of your tricks of legerdemain on us."

It was I who had brought about this illogical condition of things. So stupid it couldn't even be worked into a first class farce!

By a super-human wobble of the tongue, I managed here to ejaculate the magical

words, "it's half past ten," which signifies in our empire that it is time to feed the hens. It produced the desired effect, for however great the theme we have under consideration, hens rank first in Mariah's mind. Her absence was a necessity to my recuperation and reflection. I was weary, and felt that I should not live always.

Great cucumber pods!

Was I the universe and all the collateral belonging thereto? Evidently, as all the meanness from the Christian era down to 3456, A. D., had been directly charged to my account.

Mariah's intellect is exceedingly lop-sided. She is unable to grasp all the sides and bearings of any question.

If all her statements were true, ought I to receive credit for all the Crusades, the Martyrdoms, the butcheries that brought this people to their present enlightenment?

Who is it that has fought infidelity, liars, blasphemers and every form of rot through all these centuries?

Who is it and what is it?

But all that belongs to the past, and it is because Mariah clings so perniciously to ancient affairs, that our troubles over this question arose. When she is the brightest and clearest, mentally, which is usually in the morning, I am unable to bring her nearer to the present than the middle of the 14th century.

Looking back over my life I can in truth say that I have manfully shouldered all burdens thrust upon me, unless I could surreptitiously pile them on to some one else. That is simply the spirit of true progress. Why trig the wheels of advancement?

Should I don mourning because the Tim Tank crowd persisted in stumbling over me into tropical countries?

Blast the idiots!

Was I to blame because other people couldn't keep their own dish right side up?

Did that woman expect I was going streaking through this world and into the next loaded down with knaves and imbeciles? Thus thoroughly did I revolve the problem, looking into it from every conceivable point of

vision, weighing carefully all the merits and demerits, and I arrived at the unanimous verdict that as society was constituted just now, I was manufactured expressly for my own benefit.

Mariah also arrived, and without invitation, resumed:

"Was Christ all or nothing?

Which?

Our lives, what we actually did, not what we pretended to do, where the foundations on which rested the decisions of countless mortals in regard to those questions.

Be cautious, the issues are great."

Then the meeting was again reopened, with special reference to my walks.

Did Christ's life and teachings instruct me to close my sanctuaries and spend months of time and thousands of dollars striding over deserts under guidance of fascinating Bedouins, or peeking down old Pharoah's mummified throat, or basking in ease and idleness by the shining waters of Lake Como, that I might the more intelligently preach the Gospel to that poor man who hadn't eaten

one square meal of victuals for six weeks?

Was it Christ that taught me to heal the sick and then with a bowie knife to demand their life or their money?

Was it Christ or B. Young, Esq., or the Sultan of Turkey, or some talented female, that originated bigamy?

Did Christ or the Bobs first introduce the idea of purity of life, purity of thought and charity towards all?

Was it Christ or some railroad king that said the earth rightfully belonged to the man who had brains enough to get it.

Was it faith in Christ or the brilliant orations of Robert G. Ingersoll that had caused millions of souls to go down to the dark river of death in smiling expectancy, the gloom dispelled?

When we (tramps and every form of corruption included in this) literally follow the injunction, "Do unto others as we would that others should do unto us"—obey it to the full extent of its meaning—then plenty would be where poverty now is; then would joy take the place of sorrow; then would

God's beautiful world, be to all, beautiful, in fact. But she could do nothing when there were so many creatures like myself, knowing caring or feeling only for themselves.

Curious Mariah, that!

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

EDUCATION.

OUR eldest son, Richard, by name, but known only as Dick, has attained unto the venerable age of fifteen years. Already he has evinced a marked tendency for avoiding labor. Yet Dick is decidely brainy. He can jump 87 feet high, turn a triple somersome-thing while descending, and land either end up.

His intellect is really marvelous, and as to running—why, when he was only four years of age, Mariah couldn't keep within speaking distance of him if she happened to be flourishing a birch stick at the time. By hard study and close application, his running is now astonishing. I am not quite sure, but I

think he has a record of some hours a mile.

The profundity enclosed in that boy's head has been the source of a vast amount of worry to me.

His throwing of an iron bar meets with deafening applause everywhere, so that I have feared his head would literally burst, from brain pressure.

By sheer mental effort, and his boot-heels, he has arisen to be the first chief in our foot ball team. Our social position may have been a slight advantage to him, but he is entitled to the most of the credit.

And so fond of study! Why, last week Dick and his warriors played a match game of foot ball with the Squashly fellows, and he returned with two of their bleeding scalps dangling from his belt, much to the pride of his mother and myself.

He would have brought the bodies, too, but the parents' thereof, with much tearful pleading, prevailed upon him to let the remains remain.

But it is needless to enumerate more of his many startling intellectual feats. There has

been no doubt in my mind for years, that could I give the boy the benefit of a base-ball-college education he would eventually make a big scratch on this era.

Money was an actual necessity in carrying through a project of that kind. Tomahawks, oars, boots, etc., are expensive, and my pride would not permit me to send a boy to school unless he was fully equipped for the most advanced studies. But Mariah keeps the money! If she took kindly to the idea of sending Dick to college, all would be well. If otherwise, the dazzling aspirations of a brilliant son and the fond dreams of an indulgent father must tumble to the earth, Lucifer fashion.

I wish here to digress briefly for the purpose of adding emphasis to the outrageous blunder of my life, viz: Allowing myself to be bound in wedlock before I had secured a perfect legal title and right to all of Mariah's property. In those bright, cooing days of courtship, had I been possessed of sufficient foresight to have manfully said, "Mariah, I cannot trust my life in your keeping until

after all your valuables are made over to me," she would have given them without hesitation rather than to have lost a bud of such promise, but I didn't give vent to any ideas of that nature until the designing creature had me yoked up tight and fast in matrimony, and then, not the shred of a cent in my own name could or did I get.

For this egregious omission not only I but posterity must suffer.

Young man, standing on the yawning brink of matrimony, gather wisdom from my folly. Profit by my mistake before it is too late!

And my worst fears were fully realized in the matter of Dick's college project, for no sooner had I broached the subject of properly educating Dick, than Mariah proceeded to deluge me with insanity of the rankest description. Indeed, I think this is the most severe attack she has had.

"Education!" she said. She thought it was about time somebody was educated up to work. There wasn't an American boy or girl in the country that one could get to work in the house or on the farm.

Why? Because the children have been too long taught, by fond parents and tender teachers, how much they resemble Daniel Webster, and how if they study real hard, sometime they will become great, like Webster.

The peculiarities of Dan's head gearing have been kept a profound secret from the little fellow.

Dan had brains! which is a mighty factor in the circus, called life. However, by the above process, all the boys and girls are hustling up the ladder of wealth and fame in cities and villages. A cursed delusion that was filling the world with professional men and women of the fourteenth class, by simply discouraging the humbler callings of life.

When folks settled down and did what God intended them to do, instead of trying all the time to crawl in where they didn't belong, then she should have some faith in the present system of education; but what was the sense of trying to make a great something out of an average sized nothing. (I was glad that Dick was not present). Then there

was the cost of books, and—books——. Yes, books.

I am unable to say what Mariah meant by books, but quite likely she thinks books are used in modern schools, she is so densely ignorant! Be that as it may, if books were a necessity in receiving a college education, an additional obstacle had been rudely cast into Dick's path of glory.

Did that woman expect a boy of Dick's scholarly attainments to be dawdling around amongst books?

It must be one of Mariah's profound jokes.

But this much I gained by the interruption. No further allusion was made to books, for either through a slip of memory or a purposely changed course of reasoning, Mariah continued in this strain:

Life was too short for an individual to attempt to know every thing, even if that person was mentally equal to it. Then why couldn't people be educated with some reference to their work in life, and why couldn't that work in life, in each individual case, bear some resemblance to the natural qual-

ifications of the youth? Thousands of young people turned loose in this country every year with heads filled up with Greek roots, Hebrew rot and lots of other decomposed stuff that has about the relation to an earthly existence as eating rattlesnakes has to writing a first class poem.

Not five per cent of this highly educated army had the remotest idea of the requirements of actual life; did not know that the average life was composed entirely of the simple ingredients, bread, butter and molasses, in the securing of which something had got to be done by somebody. That something and those somebodies in the majority of instances must be small work in small spheres. Less than one per cent of these college-bred monstrosities arose above the ordinary in this world's affairs. They couldn't! Why? because they had only ordinary mental endowments, and if they had a part of a brain, more or less, the positions of greatness are not sufficiently numerous to accommodate them. The supply, such as it is, exceeds the demand. It was better to be a fair to medium

bottom of something than a useless idiot half way between heaven and earth. And so the deluded creatures are ground out year after year, in increasing numbers, filled up to overflowing with that beautiful but abominable theory that a person has only to squat down in the current of human events and sweetly wait until their education boosts them into fame. Too cultured to hoe potatoes or wield a dish cloth, or play on an anvil, and not enough brains to get where they think they belong, and consequently doing nothing through their earthly existence but dreaming and cursing an unappreciative world.

When will Mariah cease her mad ravings?

And yet the youth are not responsible for this state of things. These malicious effects were produced wholly by unwise parents and ambitious teachers, in advocating such fabrications as this, "That one becomes whatsoever he wills," and the like, which are much worse than a lie.

Millions of lives can testify that owing to just that kind of bosh being firmly impressed upon their youthful minds, their lives have

been a comparative failure—lured to unhappiness by attempting to do that for which they have no special aptitude.

Fighting against nature and producing doctors, ministers, musicians, lawyers, etc., that worked more positive injury to their respective professions then their uncircumcised carcasses—including head—were worth.

All the schools in christendom couldn't make a small man out of Abraham Lincoln, neither could the aforesaid schools make a Lincoln out of a piece of common clay.

"But, Mariah, shouldn't young people aspire?" "Of course they should aspire; but let those aspirations be in the line of common sense. What reason is there in compelling a no-legged boy to become a tight rope performer, or driving a youth through all the humdrums of a musical education who couldn't distinguish the difference between a musical tone and a plain everyday extract of July thunder, or thinking a blood-curdling, hair-lifting orator could be manufactured out of mediocrity?"

Such muck! Now, as to our Dick, she

wanted him educated; most certainly she did; but she objected to having him educated out of what nature designed him to be. Didn't want him droning through life, doing nothing, because he couldn't do something big.

The accumulation of knowledge beyond the requirements of his position, as a recreation or as a matter of culture, were commendable so long as those studies co-operated with his work and elevated his vocation.

The time was coming when we shouldn't be present to fight Dick's battles for him. Then let us prepare him for that battle, which, if ordained by life's mysteries to be a small one, shall be fought creditably, manfully, believing humbly that in God's great machinism, the most insignificant pin plays equally an important part as the massive shaft, in the calculations of the all-wise author.

Exit Mariah—having, as usual, evaded all points bearing any relation to the question.

Poor Dick!

How could a boy possessed of such a mother ever become President of these United States, or a Vanderbilt or Queen of England?

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

PRAISE.

I LOVE to be praised, not because I believe in applying that soothing slobber to other people, but because I think I am worthy of praise. Yet how many times has my aching soul been cruelly denied that solace.

In fact, in many instances, I have been literally obliged to ask people if they didn't consider me pretty, or graceful, or intellectual or awful good, and generally far superior to anybody else they happened to be acquainted with, so reluctant is humanity to render unto Cæsar that calamity which justly belongs to me.

It's a magnificent plan, this asking of questions, when judiciously carried out! Of

course the questions must be put in direct form, thus giving no chance for evasion in the answers. Very rarely do you meet with a person so rudely blunt as to answer "no," to the direct question, "do you think I am pretty?"

Aside from Mariah, I have yet to find that person who says "no" to the inquiry, "then you think I am very brainy, do you not?" But be very careful in wording the query or you will get an implied censure in place of the expected compliment.

Do I praise other people?

How you startled me! I didn't suppose there was anybody in the wide world, excepting Mariah, who could propound such an absurdity, but I find on looking around that she is busy with a consumptive lamb, and happily has not yet got on to my praise enterprise, so assuming that the question was put in all seriousness, I will answer it frankly, and in accordance with the spirit of true progress: Yes, under certain conditions.

Let any and every piece of human endowed clay, despicable or otherwise, with whom I

am acquainted, lie firmly clutched in the arms of cold death; dead beyond all hopes of resuscitation—so dead that there is not a shadow of doubt in my mind but there is going to be a real funeral—I readily discover sundry virtues possessed by that handful of dust, and I begin to cackle about and magnify upon those virtues until really there is a smile on the face of the corpse.

That's the way I do it, and why? Because all that talk is harmless now—very much so. He is an angel now in another sphere of action, and can't avail himself of any of these points to gain ascendency over me. But don't be too hasty in your eulogies. He may possibly revive, in which case it would be very embarrassing to harmonize your previous and post-mortem remarks.

A sad experience taught me that Franklin P. Saphead was my enemy, openly declared, at every turn and corner of life—as I was his. I used to devote a certain portion of each day preparing mean things to say of him.

Well, he died—died suddenly. In fact

dropped dead while at work. At any rate he was so sufficiently dead that his funeral obsequies were nearly finished, when, to the consternation of all, he stepped out of the casket, shook himself, and is a well man to-day, and solely on the strength of the good things I said of Mr. Saphead as a corpse, Mr. Saphead, as a living candidate for town office, won the election over me. It was a dearly purchased lesson, but it has stayed by me.

Wait until after the burial, before you pour out any praise, is the only absolutely safe rule. Or, better yet, wait until after the life insurance company admits he's dead.

And as to speaking in plaudatory terms of a real live person, it's simply a piece of consummate idiocy, not worthy a moment's thought.

In the fresh simplicity of young manhood that knowledge was thrust upon me. No sense in assisting other people, by praise, into some position you are striving to get yourself. Frequently I have been able to knock down a fellow, by various ignorings of his attempts, in

such a way that he has stayed knocked down and completely out of my path to earthly glory.

Of course there are creatures occasionally of such audacious makeup and so unrefined generally that they havn't sense enough to lie quietly after being poked over—up and at it again as if nothing unusual had happened. Regular beasts!

I can conceive of only one possible excuse for speaking in praise of a living person, and that is of such a vapory nature that I blush in stating it, viz:—When I can tickle up somebody to do me a favor, some work or feat wherein it is a necessity for me to have outside assistance in the accomplishment of a scheme, I speak a few words of flattery, not praise. But even in this form, as in all matters pertaining to the subject, the utmost delicacy is required, because the almost daily changes in one's fortunes make it extremely hazardous to render unto others approbation.

To-day I may coddle a person to do me a favor, by bolstering him up in a position that by tomorrow I shall want myself, so consider-

ing the difficulties which surround the praise question, it is advisable to steer clear of the whole thing, unless one is very skillful.

"You villian!"

Mariah said that, and how it grieves me to confess that she now frequently refers to me by such terms of endearment. But she has me cornered and my system must again be saturated with ancient history:

"Didn't I know that all really noble natures were ever ready, even anxious to give praise to deeds of worth, and why shouldn't they be? When a man, woman or child performs a commendable work or tries to do well, why not give them the encouragement of 'well done,' thus giving them renewed strength to fight greater battles? How many poor wretches have sunk down in despair, because their earlier attempts receive no token of appreciation! Those attempts might have been, undoubtedly were crude, yet bearing unmistakable evidence of honest, painstaking endeavor, still the courage to further struggle had been knocked down forever, because no cheering word had been spoken. Why not

lift the clouds from a fellow-being's soul and let in the healthful sunshine of kind words, loving sympathy? This hanging around graveyards, singing praises to deaf ears was toc contemptible for expression — meanness personified."

It's an absolute impossibility for that woman to consider any question in the light of the 19th century, and as to praise, she will praise anything and everybody excepting myself. Why, this morning our horse, by a premature elevation of his hind feet, came within one-eight of an inch of scattering my colossal brain over seven hemispheres, whereupon Mariah rushed up to him and began petting him, and telling him how noble, how intelligent he was!

Why is it that Mariah never agrees with me?

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

TEMPERANCE.

WITH the exception of eating and drinking, I am a strictly temperate man. The feverish excitements of the age in which we live produce no immoderation in my mode of living. Let the crowd hasten on, pushing and elbowing, what do I care. We all eventually arrive at the cemetery. But I do love to eat and I have a genuine affection for drinking, it is so pleasing—the sense of fulness.

I love rum for a variety of reasons, but probably the greatest satisfaction I derive therefrom arises from my intense patriotism, my loyalty, my earnest desire to keep this government on a solid financial basis.

As I have observed this nation marching gloriously into debt—a little deeper each year—I have made strenuous efforts to keep the whiskey revenue up to former years.

In fact, so great is my love of country, that many times I have filled my stomach so full of alcohol that it literally overflowed, purely—try to believe this statement—for the purpose of enriching the national treasury. If it wasn't for that I should never touch the stuff, only as I am obliged to swill down a few glasses of wine, to show my respect to high society, and then just enough to give a sparkling lustre to my eye and tinge my imagination with brilliancy and convince the boys that I belong to modern progression. But generally those times are followed by a morning headache, which sadly interferes with my doing an honest citizen's duty with scythe or pitchfork, so that to relieve the pain and not lose any time in the work the Lord has appointed me to do, I take a good stiff drink of unreduced whiskey, which in its tussle with the headache so wrenches my organization that I am obliged to take a

couple of drinks more to help my system recover from the shock incurred by curing my pain, which many times produces a chill that may lead down to consumption or pneumonia and death, and the thought of my wife and children left without the protection of my mighty arm drives me to rum again—wholly for their precious sakes.

And then I have an abject horror of contagious diseases to guard against, which I always have a respectable sized prescription of alcohol ready to apply internally, should I spy any bacteria walking about, which I frequently do discover, and immediately insert into my being a liberal dose of the preventive, (as a preventive it requires nearly double the quantity used in ordinary ailments, or in the same proportion as used in a first-class fishing excursion), which seems to arouse the envy of a very peculiar digestive apparatus attached to my stomach, so that I am compelled to take some stimulant, before and after eating, which I have noticed brings on a feeling of uneasiness, superinduced by overwork, which can only be relieved by

swallowing lager beer, which again induces that headache, which I proceed to medicate for in the usual way, etc., etc.

When I began this chapter I honestly supposed I was what might be termed a very moderate drinker, but after telling candidly the only occasions, with the exception of when I am engaged in fishing or politics, in which I ever allow myself to indulge in intoxicating drinks, I must, in justice to myself, add that I am a temperance man, having learned by this means that I use it only in case of sickness.

Speaking with respect to strict accuracy, I should not probably be classed a total abstainer, yet, nevertheless, as a man pretty strongly mixed up in temperance work.

No one can hold the drinking habit more in abhorrence, than myself, when it is entered into by people of good health, merely for amusement.

Guzzling the stuff night and day, and thereby surrounding themselves and families with all the squalor and desolation contained in the list, and doing nine-tenths of the crimes

and gathering unto their estates all the poverty not previously engaged—sort of Tim Tank style.

Why, that man has reached such a stage of degradation that he hasn't any sense of pride left; so low that he won't even chew cubebs or cardamon seeds to purify his breath.

That condition of things, of course, has no application to you and I, because we are invalids, and moreover Mariah refuses, point blank, to have her property turned down any man's throat—indeed I have several times been compelled to get into debt for rum to protect my health and shield my family from contagious sickness, which I regret to say, like many other duties I have performed solely for the benefit of others, has received no appreciation from her who solemnly promised to cherish me through all kinds of weather, until my noble heart should cease to wobble.

But she is coming. Reader, accept in advance my sympathy for what we shall be obliged to hear from that woman on this subject. She is a professional crank along

all lines, but on temperance words fail me!

However, while Mariah is working herself up to the proper oratorical pitch, (it usually takes her from three to five minutes), I will relate an incident which illustrates, though feebly, her ideas.

Last winter a horrible cold was suddenly thrust upon me. So suddenly and violently was I taken that I dare not go to my medicine case, which, for convenience, I kept in the barn. Mariah admitted that my condition was such that I required a little alcohol in some form.

Well, she had a spoonful of brandy hid about the house, to be used in cases of necessity, which she at once produced, and I lolled back in the chair, supposing, of course, that she would lovingly hold my hands and gaze angel-like into my eyes while I drained the contents of the bottle. As this cosey picture floated before my mind's eye I believe I never felt such adoration for Mariah. Was ever man before blessed with such implicit wifely confidence?

That was all a dream, pleasant but deceitful.

What actually occured, was this: She poured out of the bottle one drop—I counted it—into a quart dish half filled with water, and after stirring the mixture well, she poured two drops—I counted them, also—of the brandy and water on to a lump of loaf sugar, and told me to take a small nibble of the sugar once an hour, or oftener, if I really thought it necessary.

But hear her:

"God pity me, and every woman who has a husband like mine. A husband, who deliberately, for his manhood, substitutes a bloating, blaring, staring, poisonous drink; who feels none of the responsibilities of life towards God and his fellow-creatures; who drags those whom should be dearest to him through a literal hell. Halt! before it is too late; before all the refined feelings of nature are gone forever. How did I expect to feel well when I was eating until I couldn't see and drinking rum and bumming around nights? A temperate life and clean habits was the greatest stimulant ever manufactured."

That was all Mariah said.

There is a mystery in connection with this which I am unable to fathom. She is becoming extremely brief of late, and just a trifle personal.

NOTE. — In enumerating the occasions when I use stimulants, I omitted to state, that in times of sorrow I drink to drown them, and being a man by nature given to melancholy, my sorrows are frequently of such size that it requires large quantities of rum to completely cover one trouble. As a beverage, I am proud to say I never touch the stuff.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

ENTERTAINMENTS.

IT doesn't take but a mighty little to amuse some people. I am personally acquainted with several of that kind. But that little, those people are just as anxious to partake of, as some other people are to attend a grand concert or a circus.

Here is a fellow that gets as much solid satisfaction out of seeing somebody else slip down as you get out of a number one lecture. Probably, a plain every-day tumble-down wouldn't be a source of special gratification to you, neither would the lecture afford the other chap much comfort, but take away the lecture and the tumbling down and there is something lacking in each of your lives. One

must have amusement, diversion, entertainment, and what constitutes those things is a matter of opinion, of taste, of education.

When listening to a Symphony orchestra concert you have felt yourself being wafted into a land where you didn't belong by the harmony of classical strains, or have felt your hair raising and the cold chills creeping down your spine, under the orator's power, or have gone all to pieces over an elegantly written poem. You, I say, while under those influences, have entirely forgotten that any or all of those performances create in me only a sleepy feeling; that I, in order to get into those exalted regions with you, must listen to a jig fiddler, or a clown, or read a parody.

Which is the greater, classics or jigs, orators or clowns, poetry or sells?

In the majority of cases it's all a matter of culture, of circumstance. Without any reference to quality, there are a lot of us here, and our grade of entertainments, whether high, medium or low, and our capacity for enjoyment of the same, depends largely on our situation in life—on what we are familiar with.

The poor boy is just as liable to have the breadth of soul necessary to the appreciation of fine things, as the rich one, but he hasn't the means to gratify his high tastes, and so he looks to cheaper things for diversion and his soul contracts to meet the requirements of the conditions. There was no chance, no occasion for the expansion of that soul.

By the way, this business of contraction or expansion of souls is whose fault, yours or mine? Am I to be censured for going into raptures over what would be perfect torture to you, and vice versa?

But as I was saying, the human race hankers after some kind of a circus, and it has been scientifically demonstrated that country people are a species of the human family; that they are just as good, just as bad, just as great, that is, in proportion to their numbers and opportunities. That they dance and pray and murder and go to prison and Congress, the same as other folks, and have the same desires for entertainment.

They of the cities can buy their shows, or rather the forms of amusement are every-

where at hand, costing only the price of admission, whereas they of the country must manufacture their shows—in fact must be the show itself. So it comes about that in the country there are church sociables, drunks, parties, theatricals, etc., composed entirely of "home talent." No foreign "stars" to dazzle and confuse the audience. Occasionally the monotony is varied by the appearance of strolling minstrel troups, or the like, and it is the advertised appearance of a city theatrical party in our village to-morrow night that has wrought Mariah all up again, to say more of those awful things to me. Would you suppose she could, after all that you know I have been obliged to endure from her?

Mariah could, and she did, but in justice to her I wish to state that I do not think her love of controversy, her desire to argue with me, was the prime motive in the present upheaval, but owing chiefly to what has been previously intimated, her insane persistency in clinging to old customs, determined to waddle along in the old

ruts, would not accept of advanced thought.

Now in the case of this theatre company, Mariah positively refused to attend with me for the very silly reason that it was a variety show, composed principally of sky-kicking females. Such shows might furnish entertainment but were not instructive; contained nothing suggestive for after-thought; no food for intellectual reflection.

Poor, deceived woman! That vaudeville performance, if as advertised, was to be brimful and overflowing with charming suggestions.

I resolved to make one more effort to get Mariah to attend, to lift her into modern channels, and that I might place the matter before her eyes in a more eloquent light I went to the village for the purpose of studying the play-bills and bulletin-boards. The bulletin-board in our place is the broadside of a fifty foot barn which stands exactly opposite the meeting house sheds. One standing in the rear of those sheds and gazing through the cracks between boards has an excellent opportunity of observing the bulletin-boards

without being himself observed. As soon as I could do so, without being noticed, I went behind the sheds. Not but what I would just as soon have stood directly in front of the barn, only by so doing I exposed myself to all kinds of interruption, which of course prevented concentration of thought and the comprehension of details. A great issue was at stake, and I was using every means to win.

As I suddenly dodged behind the shed imagine my consternation on finding Thomas Plug there, also, comfortably seated and glaring with all his eyes right out through the very best crack in the whole shed towards the barn. I asked him if he had lost anything. He said he hadn't, was simply trying to figure out what Tim Tank was up to out there in front of those pictures. I said I'd help figure out that problem if I could find a respectable crack to figure from, which I, with the aid of my knife, succeeded in finding. It was a very inferior crack in comparison to the one occupied by Mr. Plug, but it was better than none. Sure enough, there on an old barrel, not ten feet from the bulletin-

boards, in plain sight of all, sat Tim Tank, lost in admiration of the gorgeously painted scenes before him. I said such unfettered liberty as Tim Tank availed himself of was really shocking.

"Disgusting," whispered Plug, and continued. "He's been there for more than two hours, because he was there before you came here."

But there he continued to sit, as happy, apparently, as some people in a prayer-meeting, staring at those illustrated girls. Daintily attired girls, if the illustrations were at all true to life. Girls who by some curious negligence had forgotten to don their winter clothing; also had omitted their summer suits, and probably thinking bloomers immodest, had decided to wear nothing but a thing fastened about the hips that resembled a Japanese parasol in a simoon. Such superb limbs, and graceful bodies, and so fascinating generally!

One entrancing creature—she was called on the bills the "Queen of all Straddling Kickers"—was portrayed as bestowing a

ravishing smile upon an enthralled audience. While one foot rested on the top of her head with the other she was making supremely graceful stabs at the moon. There the bewitching damsel posed, pioneer of striding civilization, in our benighted region.

Plug and I had practically agreed that Tim Tank was a bad, low man, when my friend, Mr. Saphead, prematurely shot around the corner into our midst. He seemed to be surprised, but finally said he came back of the shed to watch Tim Tank look at the barn. I loaned him my knife to fix up the proper size of a crack to look through. At the present rate of increase it was only a question of a little time before there wouldn't be enough cracks in the old shed to accommodate those respectable citizens who wished to gaze on Tim Tank, so I went home to try and impress the incorrigible Mariah that it was a duty she owed to me, to her children, to those gaiety girls, who were so nobly struggling to enlighten the world, to attend the theatre in company with her family. I discoursed as well as I knew on the sublimity of the

performance; its stimulating influence on the youth; its far-reaching suggestiveness. I told her the day of heavy dramatic work was passing away to make room for a higher order of things, and it was our duty to strive and keep pace with the procession. I assured her most solemnly that if she would go to that show with me I would keep a careful lookout and if there were to be any scenes enacted which might cause embarrassment to her backward nature, I would give warning in season that she might cover her face with her hands and she could peek out at the artists from between her fingers. By so doing she could gauge her observations to the amount she could digest. Gradually the space between the fingers could be widened and the dose increased.

By an extremely agile movement on my part the water pitcher hit the cellar door instead of my head, and before I could pick up the broken pieces (of pitcher) Mariah was raving like a maniac.

Did I suppose she, a wife and mother, would be seen at an entertainment of a

questionable order—at any place where she couldn't, with pride, be accompanied by her son and daughter? To think the children had a father capable of suggesting such a thing and of wanting to go himself!

The entertainments indulged in, the books read, the recreations we permitted ourselves to enjoy, whether of the intellectual or animal order, became part and parcel of our nature. It was through the mind results were obtained. Should that mind be fed on sensualities or nourished by a quality of food that caused it to strive for greater attainments, expand? Did the portrayal of smut by books, theatres or society, purely for the sake of the smut, make better, greater manhood or lovelier womanhood? Did the breeding of intemperance and vice add beauty or elevation to beings whom God created in his own image?

An entertainment might be amusing or instructive, or vulgar, or a combination of the three things, and set before the public for any or all of those purposes. Which should it be?

Whatever the public demanded, the public got. If it demands a book or a drama filled with indelicate hints, reeaking with all the vileness of human nature and atmospheres surging with legs, for no reason but to exhibit legs and the low contortions of thought, it got its desire. If it wanted plays, etc., depicting in strong light the woes and glories of life's mysteries, using the unfortunate shadows thereof, only as a beacon to warn other travellers, it got that also.

Who and what is the public?

She and I were a small portion of it, and the sanction of our presence, our patronage of whatever was high or low, gave just so much encouragement for the continuance of one or the other, good or bad.

Why, of course people must have variety, and with all the innocent forms of amusement, the health-giving sports, the great intellectual treats afforded by literature, drama, music, art—certainly a rich variety—all within the grasp of those disposed to participate.

Every heart manufactured its own idol. Should that idol be made of dirt or diamonds?

Madness!

I am not quite certain that *madness* is the proper ejaculation to use here, for as soon as Mariah cooled down sufficiently, so that I considered there was no danger of her making further physical assaults on me, I went to sleep, and consequently lost a considerable portion of her exhortation. When I awoke she was gone. However, as the word *madness* can be appropriately applied to most of her savings, I am going to chance it here, trusting that it fits exactly. Madness!

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

WRECKS.

IN confidence I am going to tell you something. Don't lisp a word of it to anybody else, even if they do promise never to tell it, because the secret I am giving you, if rightly used and kept strictly in your charitable bosom, will increase your happiness tenfold; but once the receipt becomes generally known, its charm is lost forever.

There is nothing in this wide world causes my angelic heart to thump with such unallowed satisfaction as the misfortunes of other people—preferably my acquaintance.

The proportion of enjoyment I derive from other's troubles depends on the size of the calmity and how well I know the party afflicted.

For instance, if a person whom I have known for years runs against snags that just about ruins his earthly prospects, or at least knocks him out of the race for some time. When a case of that kind comes to my notice every pore of my magnificent being thrills with delight. Fact is, I am never real happy—never experience that peace which comes only from perfect contentment, unless there is somebody in my immediate vicinity in some kind of trouble. Troubles of a physical nature or honest financial failures, and the like, of course furnish me a mild form of happiness, but when the troubles arise which are destined under my careful treatment and aid to ruin somebody's character, then do I become ecstatic.

When I learned that friend Saphead was accused of crookedness in a money deal and rumor said there was going to be a wedding up at Pelix's, in which the sheriff was to act as groomsman, and that Thomas Plug's oldest son was becoming intemperate, a delicate feast is spread for my epicurean fancies.

And right here lies much of the beauty and power of the secret I am revealing to you, and the results depend largely on whether you manage now with tact or otherwise. Imitate my example in that respect. The first thing I do after hearing news of the above nature is to go to the barn or some secluded place and lie down and laugh and roll over and yell and hurrah and te-he until my feelings of hilarity are so far spent that I have myself under perfect control, and I briefly thank the Lord for creating me so honest, so pure and good, and then I am in condition to appear before the world.

I then put on my very longest face—a face with several inches more of latitude than the one I use at funerals—and go out among my fellow-citizens and hark for information. It is a much better way to let your neighbor begin the talk, because that gives you such a chance to add helpful thought, seemingly innocent remarks, to the scandal. As for instance, when the Saphead money transaction is mentioned to me I roll back my eyes and say, "I can't hardly—I don't want to—it's

really a great strain on my credulity to believe it of him, and yet it may be so, because I knew of some things in connection with Mr. Saphead that were rather peculiar, etc."

You want to have a very liberal supply of evidence and conjecture, either real or imagined, ready to substantiate the original yarn, and which will also make generous additions to the story. Of course I utter all of these extras in the "I understood," or "so and so said" kind of way, which not only makes what I say more effective, but extends the impression that the news is breaking my heart, still all the time I am as tickled as tickled can be—internally.

That rule will apply in a case like the Pelix wedding, only that needs a little more acting. Let me rehearse it with you: You are supposed to have been through all the preliminary steps and are ready to begin at the critical point I tell you of the Pelixs. No, no, don't snicker right out. I thought you said you were all ready to begin. Can't you see by that snickering you are ridiculing the scandal—will kill it all together if you

don't conduct yourself more artfully. There, that's better. In cases of this description, you must, if possible, roll your eyes entirely out of your head at this point. Pause a full minute, then exclaim in agonized tones, "w-wh-why-e-ee-e! Pause again, and give the heavens a crack-splitting gaze of sadness and then gasp, "how could she?" Another pause, in which our deep emotions are becoming calm, recovering from the terrible shock, and we talk the matter over in a spirit of candor. I make a suggestion which at once reminds you of seeing a certain Miss lurking around a certain place when it was almost sundown. That was several months ago, and you didn't think anything of it at the time—of course you didn't, you darling old lump of innocence, but now, in the light of these awful developments what you saw is a shining circumstance—is the conclusive bit of evidence required in the glorious (?) affair.

That's right. You are catching hold of the idea beautifully, only you must practice the art of magnifying—brighten up the powers of originality a little. I never allow a story

detrimental to any one's character or prospects along any line to leave me as I heard it. I look it over carefully, study it from all its various bearings and tack on a little slur here, enlarge the injurious points there, by several diameters; at other points embellish the thing with plausible insinuations, (lies, Mariah calls them), and put the yarn again into circulation.

In seasons when there is nothing special going by the way of gossip or slander or scandal, I have gratuitously furnished time and thought in ascertaining the weak points of certain people morally, or financially, or politically, and from the slimmest foundations of fact, constructed and made public incidents which well nigh ruined the parties involved, and afforded the community elegant topics for conversation.

It's a delightful past-time, that, but like all the fine arts, it requires culture to be successfully followed—cunning.

But how do I manage to get all these things into general circulation, without implicating myself? That is a very important point, yet

one easy of performance. I always act under the head of anonymous. That is, after maping out in my mind every detail of the slander that I wish to put before the public. I tell you that Anonymous 2 told me that Anonymous 1 told him that there was terrible doings over yonder, and Anonymous 1 didn't want the aforesaid news to become general gossip, so after adminstering a blood-curdling oath to Anonymous 2 to never, never tell it, Anonymous 1 tells Anonymous 2 and Anonymous 2 makes me take the oath of eternal secrecy, and tells me the horrible stuff, and I tell it to you just as soon as Anonymous 2 is out of hearing, with the solemn injunction that you mustn't never tell it to anybody else; but if you do tell it to others—of course you won't tell it—tell it as big as it is, and tell whoever you tell that they mustn't tell it, but if they must tell it, tell it large to those they tell, and tell them to tell it to those that they tell that they are in honor bound not to tell a word of it.

Shameful how some folks will abuse a confidence of this kind!

You fail to see the object of all this? After these vivid explanations you see no purpose.

Your simplicity reminds me of Mariah!

Wrecks! The creation of human wrecks is the plainly visible purpose! Take away the human wrecks that are scattered all along life's course and you take away much of the pleasure of your life and mine, because there is nothing that supplies the self-satisfying consolation as supplied by other people's troubles. See them all around, everywhere, writhing under this burden and going down under that load—sinking never to rise! The high inspirations brought to the surface by a human wreck! You and I marching along so erect, so good, so smart, keeping clear from all perplexities, all wiles!

Not only is this struggling mass of wreckage a source of perpetual delight to you and I, but it also serves as a danger signal. Warns us of the bog-holes, the sunken reefs, and thereby we dodge many of the snares lying in the course. But the number of human wrecks would greatly diminish if it were not for our unceasing vigilance—possibly cease to exist—

and then our leading amusement would be gone, and the compass which has steered the craft be worthless. In such an event you and I might become wrecks, because there was nothing to guide us.

So you will perceive, that as a matter of personal safty, it behooves us to be ever alert; to labor with increased vigor. We can't reasonably expect the Lord is going to do all of this alone. Certainly not. There is a great work for us to perform, so let us all work together—reduce this wreck-making business to a system, to the accuracy of a science. In concert let us fabricate and gossip and slander and spy out and scandalize a fellow-being, until he, from sheer disgust with the pictured enormity of his crimes, gives up the battle and becomes really bad.

It doesn't make any difference how the result is achieved—only by some, by all, or by any means, I want the fellow wrecked, and then mark the next victim, proceed as before, and so continue piling wreck upon wreck. It's a soul-tickling, body-nourishing, brain-enlarging, evil-preventing, joy-producing

recreation to me, this manufacturing of wrecks!

"Buzzard!"

It is perhaps needless for me to announce that Mariah has the floor now, and has already made her introductory preface. She looks pale, livid, and is saying, in a disconnected, incoherent way, something about humanity and adversity, and me and snakes and brutes and people and down-falls and me and scorpions and afflictions and me and hyenas and folks and reverses, and me and hell-hags and loads and curses, and me and ghouls and visitations and clouds, and me and wire-worms, etc. Nearly two pages of just such meaningless stuff as that Mariah spoke, and then she groaned and said very distinctly, "Oh! how, could I ever have married such a man?"

And I groaned, and my groan for stone-melting pathos, heart-rending sorrow, and life-shortening propensities, was as much superior to Mariah's groan as the Rocky Mountains are ahead of a hole in the grond.

My groan said, "Oh! how, could I ever have married such a woman?"

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

POLITICS.

IT may savor of conceit, but nevertheless I truly feel that there are concealed about my being all the qualifications necessary to the erection of a mammoth politician. Aye, that the making of a profound statesman, even, is wrapped up within me.

My winsome ways—"to know me is to love me"—my wonderful capacity for believing without argument everything everybody says before election; my distinguished presence; my ability to drink with the thirsty or choke to death with the dry, and leave each party with the impression that I am all solid on the different forms of temperance; my unswerving integrity in places where unsophisticated pre-

varications, coated over with wild fabrications, won't do better; my vast stock of all kinds of principles, and the tact to apply the correct principle at the right time and place; my unquestioned powers for grasping the money question—both the money and question—whether of gold or silver, or bills, or precious stones, in unlimited quantities, are a few of the minor qualities possessed by me, which entitle me to be ranked among the great politicians.

Now as to my claims for statesmanship, the schemes I have recently evolved and perfected, whereby town, state and national life would receive tremendous impetus, are the grounds on which I justify my title to statesmanship.

I maintain that such legislation should be enacted as would enable us to hang more people. Sadly deficient in that respect are our laws. Thousands of our citizens have gone to their graves, compartively unknown, simply on account of the narrowness of existing laws. Thousands of these people—think of it—living and dying in obscurity, yet possessed of rare and tender talents! Talents

that under laws of wide justice would have allowed the possessor thereof to have won lasting fame as the leading character on a well constructed gallows. And not only fame have these uncomplaining heroes lost by being compelled to die a natural death, but volumes of sentiment and armfuls of bouquets, these cruel laws have deprived them of, as well.

After this waning hanging industry had been raised to the position its importance demands, and in successful operation three years, I would bring about such legislation as would create Uncle Sam owner of this land, bag and baggage, in reality, as well as in name, and each individual to get his or her little plate of beans from Uncle Sam's own hand — the number of beans each was to receive depending entirely upon the benefits each had contributed towards the good of the whole. By this system, our life, which is now composed of swine, murderers, thieves and idiots, would gradually all turn to idiots — but so happy and contented idiots we all should be.

As soon as these great plans were complete in my own mind, I at once set to work to get myself into a position where a nation might reap the benefits of my studies, and that is the sole reason for my so rashly thrusting my life into political waters. But being a wise statesman requires one shade of brain, and scooping in the necessary votes for an election to the office which makes a statesman wise or otherwise — mostly otherwise — demands a brain of all colors and adaptabilities.

My first step towards being elected a legislator was to worm myself into the good graces of Tim Tank, though Tim does not wield a mighty influence in the social and religious life in my district, yet as a political factor he is a power. Once I gained his hearty support I was sure of the support of all the dram-drinking voters, regardless of party, for Tim is their avowed leader. I arranged a fishing expedition to the river, to be composed entirely of rum and Tim and I. Tim was a little shy of me at first, naturally supposing I belonged to the temperance party, but as we fished and drank and drank and fished, I

unfolded to Tim the beauties of my projects once the office was mine. Before night I had convinced Tim that in less than one year from the time of my election pure whiskey would run in that river in the place of water, and everybody could drink free of charge, and he promised me the votes of himself and noble compatriots.

I had indeed won a great victory, but when returning home that night we met Thomas Plug, and he caused to be put into circulation that I had been fishing with Tim Tank and came home in a maudlin condition, which of course created an uproar among my temperance supporters, and to pacify that element I conducted temperance meetings in several localities.

I told several people how I had been scandalized, what a stanch advocate, both by example and precept, I had always been of the holy cause of temperance; how if these nice people should deem it best to elect me to office, I should, as soon as consistent with the circumstances, cause all the intoxicants of whatever name in the United States, to be

destroyed by fire, and the makers and sellers thereof to be cast into the middle of the wild roaring sea.

My temperance speeches made a great hit. I had nearly regained all the ground lost in consequence of that malicious lie, when my character was assailed from another point.

It appeared in evidence that precisely one hour and thirty-six minutes after I passed Mrs. Plump's residence, she was seen peering out of a window, smiling expectantly in the direction I had gone, from which the story was manufactured and widely circulated that the aforesaid lady and myself were planning to elope, and from that the absurd inference was drawn that I was a bad lot, anyhow, and to support me for office was to put a premium on immorality.

While I was proving to the public that although I was a large man in every respect, my character towered majestically above all my other desirable qualities, a rumor was set in motion that I was the originator and founder of the A. P. A. Order, which, to prevent its costing me the entire Roman vote,

caused me to become immediately a member of the Catholic church.

This hasty and ill-advised action came near ruining my political prospects, for before I again entered the good graces of the A. P. A's I was obliged to unite with nine churches of different denominations and seven secret societies; but every new church or society I joined some other church or society was sure to be offended, yet I think I manipulated the religious and society votes with such skill that on the whole I was a gainer thereby.

It was also intimated that I was lazy and unscholarly, and therefore was not worthy of the people's suffrage. To countermand this vile insinuation during the remainder of the campaign I carried in some conspicuous place when in agricultural communities, a hoe, an ax and a barn shovel, and I discoursed to them on tuberculosis in turnips, and the goneness of calves dieted on skimmed-milk.

I told the farmers in glowing terms how they were the salt and sugar and saleratus and nobility of the earth, and if it hadn't been for the very deplorable circumstance of the

Lord's calling me to work great reformations I should have certainly been a tiller of bull-thistles and hens. (Here I made some graceful flourishes with my farming implements). I promised them, if elected, to introduce such legislation as would at the end of six months' time, under penalty of death, prohibit the making or selling or causing to be manufactured and sold any and all buffalo-flies, potato-bugs, or grass-hoppers. In the more cultured places might be seen protruding from my pockets copies of Milton's Poetical Works and a Sallustiaa Catilina et Jugurtha, and in my speeches I told this class that on their votes, on my election, depended the propagation of ——— "me-kingdom" for-a-book—and they believed it.

Meantime the illiterate voters had been informed that I was opposed to free silver. As that class could neither read or write, I was obliged to see each in person and tell them how grossly my money views had been misrepresented; how if they could stoop to honor me with their votes, in the very near future, government teams, loaded with silver

dollars, would pass that way daily and every man, woman and child could take out a ten-quart-panful of dollars, apiece, each day, which statement was at once, by the intelligent voters, construed to illustrate my extreme ignorance of the money question.

In spite of all these things—in spite of the rum—many estimable citizens had drank at Mariah's and my expense; in the face of all the rich promises I had made of every form of beneficial legislation and valuable appointments; in view of the logical arguments I had given vent to, affecting all sides of all current questions; notwithstanding my magnetic capacity for straddling fences; in spite of my sublime purity of character and deep religious convictions, an adverse current was setting in against me, which, if nothing was done to stay or reverse, doomed my political aspirations.

The impression seemed to be gaining ground that I was a drunkard and a temperance fanatic, a religious crank and a howling infidel, a many-sided political monstrosity, in whose hands the country was destined to certain ruin.

For a man who had cast self wholly aside and recklessly flung himself upon the altar of liberty, a sacrifice for humanity, to first realize that his labors for that same humanity, nobody else, being made the subject of scorn and question, is a saddening, maddening, body-tuckering, profanity-breeding, brain-clotting sensation to the victim.

In truth I can say, at this stage of the campaign, I should have given up the fight if nothing but my personal interests had been concerned, but my devouring love for my constituency, my firm desire to elevate them, my thorough conviction that only through the medium of myself could their condition be improved, forced me to continue the struggle.

I went into council with Tim Tank, and after surveying the field with great care, considering all the possibilities and probabilities, we decided there was only two things more that could be done to aid in my election, and even then my success was doubtful, so abominably had I been lied about.

Our first plan was to send to a foreign country and import a few hundred voters, but

more careful consideration convinced us of the impracticability of that scheme, owing to the nearness of the election. It was found, on consulting the time-tables of ocean steamers, and making no allowance for accidents or delays, the foreigners wouldn't have but just one hour's time from reaching port to the closing of the polls to become naturalized, study our literature, art and constitution, and learn how to make their mark on the ballot. Such undue haste was decidedly distasteful to my refined nature, so that scheme was abandoned.

The accomplishment of the other plan, was more within our reach—more in accordance with my high ideals of political warfare. Tim agreed to arrange such a line of circumstances that several men who had been specially active against me should prematurely die. Their death in connection with some judicious hints made to other parties, we thought, would greatly strengthen my vote. So it did, but I was defeated. Yet I firmly believed, had that same plan been adopted earlier in the canvass I should have been

elected with an overwhelming majority. The inspirations incident to five murdered men had not time o permeate the public bosom and work out its true effect—the correct result for me.

As showing the manly fortitude with which I bore defeat and still labored for the welfare of our community, to my eternal credit be it said, it was my volunteered and candid testimony that secured the arrest and conviction of Tim Tank, and for his (?) henious crimes, seven months later, his life paid the full penalty.

"Oh! this is too hideous to believe, even of you," gasped Mariah, and she fainted dead away.

Really, I never supposed that woman had my interests so at heart.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

SUNDRIES.

HOW beautiful the snow, how cosy the fire on the hearth, how transcendently lovely the full-grown blizzard, rolling along so majestically, how invigorating the frosty mornings, how absolutely entrancing is everything and anything that pertains to winter, are the gushing thoughts that rise up in your cranium and mine as we swelter in the summer heat. But alas! the fickleness of human nature! When our noses and ears are frost-bitten and our brows are being fanned by stinging zephyrs fresh from the Esquimaux maiden's fair cheek, and we are stuck fast in a snow drift, it occurs to us that there is really no earthly comfort outside of

perspiration and large black flies, and that to hear the father of all mosquitoes singing his favorite hymn, and to feel his pearly teeth nibbling our flesh, would be paradise.

Funny, isn't it, you and I never got into a position yet but we wanted to get somewhere else in order to be perfectly happy. It must be the fault of this world; still Mariah has told me repeatedly in private that this was the very best world I should ever get into unless there was a radical change in my mode of living.

There it is again, you and I are all right, and so is Mariah, in our respective minds, but there is wide diversity of opinion in those minds and in the deductions whereby we have arrived at certain conclusions. There is a mighty discrepancy. Who appointed you or I or Mariah umpire in this case?

You and I are all right when we can have hash when we want it, but the trouble is we don't get that dish set before us until our craving for hash is all gone by and we have on a hankering for pea-soup. Then hash is disgusting. If you and I and Mariah could

only be in some place we are not in, how great, how good we should be. By some strange freak in this little arrangement we are not in those positions, and so while millionaires are refusing to found colleges in heathen lands and establish missionary stations in the centres of civilization, you and I continue to work off decayed cabbage at the ministerial donations and warrant spavined horses sound.

You and I and the other fellow, so far as pure goodness or genuine badness are concerned, stand on the same level, yet we must in honesty admit he has the advantage of us in the matter of brains. Still we, you and I and he, are all making use of our different sized and different numbered talents—not one of the lights has been stuck under a bushel and not a talent or a fraction of a talent has been buried.

Whether the use we put those things to produce white wings on the shoulders, or scraggly horns from the head, or something else awaits us, are questions we have preached and sung and philosophized and

speculated over for ages, and in regard to which we are just as wise as at the start, no wiser so far as positive knowledge is concerned; but it is a fact possible of mathematical demonstration that if certain teachings uttered near two thousand years ago, were universally followed, hell would be geographically beyond the borders of this earth.

Well, we have intended to do some marvelously fine things but something bobbed up and smashed our grand intentions into splinters, so that what we actually did, though still marvelous, was a great ways from being fine.

Now when I began this work I had in mind an elaborate plot to write into a novel. There was of course to be a deep, subtile lesson running through the romance, yet so nicely woven into the characters' lives as to be only pleasantly susceptible to the reader.

There was to have been Katie, the heroine, a girl of sky-blue color and curly ears and glossy brown hair and pimply fingers, who, after repeated solicitations from Charlie, at

last tumbles right into love with Charlie. Charlie was a good fellow of the place and would have made any good woman a husband, but in the meantime Jack, the all-around tough, has got into love with Katie and urges her to flee with him to the minister's, but while she is studying whether it shall be Jack or Charlie, Jack washes his feet, which causes him to take a severe cold, and sixty-seven years later he dies. But before the occurrence of that happy event, Katie and Charlie become re-engaged, Katie having wisely decided that a poor living husband was better than a good dead one, and Charlie having pledged himself by all the powers great and small never, never to take a bath.

That, in brief is the synopsis of one of the most intricate pieces of fiction a long suffering world ever escaped. As the thing was mapped out in my mind, I have no hesitation in saying that from its beginning through to the thrilling though sad denouement, the acute character delineations, the rich description of places and customs, the accurate portrayal of life in its various phases, all

written in my fascinating, graceful style, should have made the work very rare.

But please observe, before I had completed the first chapter Mariah tuned up on that old, old theme, "Marriage," and in deference to her wishes I decided to picture some of the bright lights and coal-black shadows of matrimony, using the above outlined plot as the groundwork, as before.

Well, I had the new arrangement fairly under way, when I was again rudely interrupted by Mariah on the subject of "Work," and to preserve peace and keep our household furniture in a saleable condition, I was again obliged to change the idea, but still I thought I could use the main features of the original plot in a story depicting country life. With that end in view I diligently studied Agricultural Reports and had got so I could mix up love scenes with the cultivation of the stately sun-flower, the country prayer-meeting with the fanning of mild-eyed cows with milking stools—got so I could mix those things delightfully, and Mariah broke loose on Religion.

It was going to be as I feared, no use in trying further to pursue a definate plan in the work. Better go at these old antiquated, fossiliferous topics, haphazard and close them out, so that if I survived the ordeal my future attemps would be free from such nonsense. But I did not abandon my cherished project easily, without first trying to discover some means by which I could carry out my first inspirations.

There was only one practical solution to the question and that was to swap Mariah for another Mariah. If I could get hold of a Mariah possessed of all of my present Mariah's virtues without having any of her failings, the world might yet receive the benefit of my lofty plans. With that object in view I looked around amongst the Mariahs. There was Mariah Plug, who always appeared pleasant and smiling in my presence, and whom, so far as I knew, was not given to argument. She, I thought, was the Mariah for me. I was just at the point of suggesting negotiations of Mariahs with Mr. Plug, when it occurred to me that Mariah Plug had no

money in her own name. The thought spoiled that trade for me. I couldn't possibly get along with a Mariah that didn't have money. Curious but I considered twelve different Mariahs and in each case I was almost certain that I had at last found the correct Mariah, when, just at the fatal moment, just as I was to consumate the swap of Mariahs, I would learn that this Mariah had a glass eye and that Mariah was a pugilist, and another Mariah was nothing but mouth and tongue, and so it proved with all those Mariahs.

Come to know them, each had as many and most of them more and worse imperfections than my Mariah. I gave up in despair. I must stick to and jaw with my own Mariah through all this rubbish, until the climax was reached in Politics, when I think Mariah also gave up in despair. And here you have the disorted remains of what were at the start the very highest intentions.

After all it signifies nothing, for it is written: Man is of few days and his nights are variable. He entereth the world and he snorteth. He draweth forth from a bottle the

wherewith of life, until, by the swelling of his gums, he yelleth, and the father thereof, at such an hour as the moon is at its zenith, and the bull-frog singeth not, ariseth up, going to and fro with him that sweareth for teeth, and long and deep is his wail as he thinks of the Hymenean vows. Time tarrieth not, teeth appear, and he walketh among his fellow-citizens clad in knee-breeches, and his garment pockets, from insufficiency of size, fail to accommodate several billion of different sundry, various and miscelleanous articles, both old and new, garnered from a multitudinous assortment. He weepeth, for his soul is sore vexed. His mind soareth after knowledge and he proceedeth to institutions of learning, but the master therein cheweth his ear.

Verily, life is darkness.

He entereth his fourteenth summer, and behold his neighbor's daughter is comely and fair to look upon.

He goeth up to that neighbor's house and the daughter yeaeth, but the head of the household loometh up and nayeth with the might of both feet.

He goeth abroad in the earth and cleaveth unto rectitudes not perpendicular. His soul assumeth a grasping hue, and he claweth in diverse places for gold, but others are also clawing, and behold the beings are full of experiences and he sinketh upon his back a minus quantity financially.

He desireth to serve his country, and aspireth, but his friends are not of the majority, and it is discovered that in his youth he was very wicked.

He draweth his feet up under him and forgeteth to breathe and the neighbors gather thereabout and marvel right out loud of the man's many virtues and dazzling brilliancy, but he is not of the earth, and his ears listen not to earthly jabber.

Many there be who travel in roads strewn with fine gravel stones, and whereby the stately mullein stalk rears its graceful plumage, and the dashing hornet trills sweet melodies and warbleth his bit, but they are not of the majority.

And so time, and I, and you, and Mariah move along.

Nothing in my life for two years past to remind me of those sweet days agone, when Mariah declared in resonant whispers, that I was the best, the greatest, the only—but why repeat it—I was the universe in short, excepting when a thunder storm is in progress, then she flies to my arms and nestles, and coos and woos, with the old-time emphasis.

Mariah don't know to this day but what I have concealed in the hollow of my hand all the thunder and lightning going and can cause the stuff to obliterate her any moment I wish.

Please not misuse my confidence by informing her of the true nature of thunder and lightning, or who controls it. Once she learns the true facts in the matter, my only weapon for reducing Mariah to proper subjection is gone. My only means of finding out whether she loves me or not is destroyed. The only link which binds Mariah and I and the past will be broken.

You cannot, you will not be so heartless as to tell her.

NO MORE.

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